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ABSTRACT

This review addresses the characteristics and needs of gifted learning disabled (GLD) and gifted underachieving (GUA) students and provides educational strategies for both groups. A section on the GUA describes these students' unique personal, social, and family characteristics and notes that underachievement is more prevalent among boys than girls. Educational methods for working with the GUA include bibliotherapy and study skills instruction. In chart form, characteristics of GLD are contrasted with characteristics of children with high intelligence and high motivation. Educational implications for serving GLD students involve improving communication between teachers of the gifted and teachers of the learning disabled, developing compensatory skills, and providing proper placement and programming. As the concept of learning disability has become synonymous with underachievement, the problem in identifying the GUA and GLD becomes complex. Education for both groups can be helped through mentorships. The paper concludes that the etiology of learning difficulty and underachievement is different, that learning disabilities do not always contribute to underachievement or low achievement, and that GLD should not be identified as GUA. (43 references) (JDD)

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GIFTED LEARNING DISABLED AND GIFTED UNDERACHIEVERS :
SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

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GIFTED LEARNING DISABLED AND GIFTED UNDERACHIEVERS: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Gifted learning disabled (GLD) and gifted underachievers (GUA) have been recognized as for their handicap conditions, not as for their gifts, talents, or abilities (Lewis & Doorlag, 1987). They are one of the invisible, underserved subgroup of the gifted, who suffer from their learning and social problems (Gallagher, 1988; Silverman, 1989). Recently Silverman (1989) reported that about one-six of the total number of children who have been assessed in the Gifted Child Development Center in Denver are the category of the GLD.

These two subgroup receive no services or inappropriate services. Teachers who work with the gifted do frequently neglect that some of these students might have their either underachievement or learning disability symptoms, and teachers who deal with either underachievers or learning- disabled students do not consider that some of these may be gifted. Teachers are not even aware of the characteristics and needs of the GLD and GUA.

Therefore, this study attempts to address and compare the characteristics and needs of the GLD and the GUA. In addition, educational strategies will be provided for both group.

GIFTED UNDERACHIEVERS

Characteristics

Studies of the gifted underachievers have identified characteristics that are typical of these children. Durr (1964) presented a diagram of the factors that correlated with the underachievement of gifted youngsters. As illustrated in Figure 1, he classified the various factors under four categories: (a) Family Background and Relationships, (b) School, (c) Social Adjustment, and (d) Personal Adjustment. In this diagram, Durr was concerned about cause and effect relationships between various factors and underachievement. In his words: " When these characteristics are found with young gifted children who have not shown underachievement, they may be considered warning signs of possible trouble ahead " (p. 44). He went on to say, " ... concerning the characteristics of

these students... a pattern of multiple factors, rather than any single factor, is usually associated with underachievement" (p. 44).

Whitmore (1980) who summarized some of the most important characteristics of gifted underachievers, recommended that if an individual exhibits at least 10 of the traits, including all of those asterisked as shown in Table1, the teacher should begin with individual intelligence testing in order to determine whether the individual is a gifted underachiever.

Other researchers including Gallagher (1975), Grau (1985), Shaw (1961) and Thiel and Thiel (1977) have contented that underachievement is predominantly a male problem, especially in the elementary grades. In a study of the differences in sex characteristics among gifted underachieving boys and girls at the high school level. Gowan (1955) found that the family backgrounds of high school gifted underachievers differed significantly from gifted achievers in that because boys are less mature than girls, and because parents sometimes expect more of them, their introduction to cultural task demands may be more difficult, and more problems may occur.

Overall, researchers have shown that gifted underachievers have unique personal, social, and family characteristics and that underachievement is more prevalent among boys than girls.

Educational Implications for the GUA

Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy can be very useful in helping the underachieving gifted to resolve their personal-social, academic, and career problems. As Frasier and McCannon (1981) stated that bibliotherapy can give a vicarious experience to the gifted. Van Tassel-baska (1990) suggested that one of the roles of the counselor of the gifted is to encourage students to read books related to their problems and discuss the issues in their readings.

Bibliotherapy is a natural tool for both the underachieving gifted and achieving gifted. Hoagland (1972) defined bibliotherapy as " the attempt of an individual to promote his mental and emotional health by using reading materials to fulfill needs, relieve pressures or help his development as a person." (p. 390) Therapy does not necessarily mean to heal problems, but mean to help the gifted change undesirable behavior and improve their positive thinking process. For example, bibliotherapy can be utilized for



Figure 1. Factors in Underachievement of the Gifted

FROM : Durr, W. K. (1964). The gifted students. New York : Oxford University Press.

Table 2

A Checklist to Identify Gifted Underachievers

- =====
- *Poor test performance
 - *Achieving at or below grade -level expectations in one or all of the basic skill area: reading, language arts, mathematics
 - *Daily work frequently incomplete or poorly done
 - *Superior comprehension and retention of concepts when interested
 - *Vast gap between qualitative level of oral and written work
 - Exceptionally large repertoire of factual knowledge
 - Vitality of imagination, creative
 - Persistent dissatisfaction with work accomplished, even in art
 - Seems to avoid trying new activities to prevent imperfect performance :
evidences perfectionism, self-criticism
 - *Has a wide range of interests and possibly special "expertise" in an area of investigation and research
 - *Evidences low self-esteem in tendencies to withdraw or to be aggressive in the classroom
 - Does not fountain comfortably or constructively in a group of any size general
 - Tends to set unrealistic self-expectations, goals too high or too low
 - Dislikes practice work or drill for memorization and mastery
 - Easily distractible, unable to focus attention and concentrate efforts on tasks
 - Has an indifferent or negative attitude toward school
 - Resists teacher efforts to motivate or discipline behavior in class
 - Has difficulty in peer relationships, maintains few friendships
-

FROM : Whitmore, J. (1980). Giftedness, conflict, and underachievement. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

the GUA in order to : 1) enhance their self-concept, 2) develop and change their values, attitudes, and higher level thinking processes, 3) improve problems solving skills by making attempt to use different approaches to a problem with a real life experience, 4) change aggressive or withdrawn behavior of the underachieving gifted, and 5) assist their career education guidance.

GUA shares his or her similar problems with a character through the literature. Halsted (1981) listed three types of bibliotherapy- institutional, clinical, and developmental. She suggested that institutional and clinical bibliotherapy are used for the students who have emotional and behavioral problems by the mental health professionals. On the other hand, teachers, parents, and school counselors utilize developmental bibliotherapy to meet needs.

Halsted (1981) described the four stages of bibliotherapy-identification, catharsis, insight and universalization. Key feature of using bibliotherapy is to provide identifies, catharsis, insight, and universalization for a reader.

In the first stage, a reader identifies with a character through the recognition of personal similarities and the care about the character in the book. The second stage involves catharsis. Halsted (1981) quoted a psychological definition of "catharsis" :

" It < catharsis> is an active release of emotions experienced either first-hand or vicariously. Catharsis goes beyond the simple intellectual recognition of commonalties as in identification ... It involves emphasis emotional reactions. " (p. 66)

In the third stage, insight, reader applies the character to his or her own life situation. In the last stage called universalization, a reader recognize that his or her difficulties and problems are not his or hers alone.

Study Skill

In fact, it was reported that gifted youngsters lack adequate study habits and weak skills, and make little effort on those school tasks which they claim are boring or too easy. (Newman, Dember, & Krug, 1973; Rimm, 1986 ; Zaffran & Colangelo, 1977). The underachieving gifted become unmotivated their learning due to the lack of study skills. They are not performing up to their potential not because of capabilities but because of study strategy deficiencies and poor test-taking skills.

Therefore, if they learn to use the effective study skills they will perform better than before. In the past, parents and school practitioners assumed that students don't get a good grade because they don't have the ability to do achieve. Nowadays, researchers and

teachers have agreed on the notion that the lack of study skill and poor test-taking skills lead the gifted to underachieve.

General counseling methods are the most widely used, however, they did not appear to be effective to improve self-concept (Dowdall & Colangelo, 1982), are time consuming and costly, and showed inconsistent results (Broedal, Ohlson, Proff & Southard, 1960). Direct study skill instruction is useful for the GUA (Crittenden, Kaplan, & Heim, 1984; Reddings, 1990). One study by Crittenden et al. (1984) showed that there were gains in their study skills with the students who showed above average on individual intelligence tests and group achievement tests, but were not performing at the level that they or others wanted.

In a recent study Reddings (1990) compared underachieving gifted adolescents with the achieving gifted on their performance. The results of this study revealed that gifted underachievers show deficits in analytical problem solving and detail-analysis, and suggested that these skill deficit should be taught by the counselors. He went on say that "Counselor can help motivate underachievers by explicitly pointing-out their weaknesses in analytical problem solving." (p. 72) GUA need to be taught these skills and strategies by modeling and work with other GUA through group counseling and practice problem solving (Reddings, 1990).

Educators and counselors could help the GUA by motivating the relationship between learning efforts and outcomes ; by recognizing and improving their study skills (Rimm, 1986). That is counselors should emphasize that these weaknesses are not due to a lack of ability but to a lack of efforts or motivation (Reddings, 1990).

GIFTED LEARNING DISABLED

As Elkind (1973) reported, Winston Churchill, Leonardo da Vinci, and other famous persons are exemplary cases which did show intelligent behavior and exhibit learning problems. If they were in school now, they would be identified as an LD.

Thomas Edison, who had problems in school, would be recognized as dyslexic today. He didn't learn to spell or write until he was 19 years of age. He was a drop-out student and was tutored by his mother. Albert Einstein did not speak until he was 3 years of age. He was a poor student who had problems with spelling and writing (Fox, Brody, & Tobin, 1983).

Goertzel & Goertzel (1962) analyzed the lives of 400 eminent men and women and found that one fourth of 400 did overcome their handicaps. These phenomenon is rarely discussed in the literature on both gifted students and learning disabled students ; little studies has been conducted on these sub-population.

About 20 years ago, the Journal of Learning Disabilities has published only several articles on the gifted learning disabled. The particular article by Thompson (1971) provided interesting clues as to the relationship between giftedness and learning disabilities.

In 1983, Fox, Brody, & Tobin wrote a book, a 297 page ; one, on learning-disabled/gifted children. They significantly contributed to the group who are concerned with these sub-population of the gifted and provided the fundamental and important information of the concepts, characteristics, identification of GLD. Recently, Roeper Review (1989) has also published special issue on gifted learning disabled with other types of gifted handicapped. This issue, which was guest edited by Whimore, contains outstanding contributions to the studies of GLD and their needs. The theme was introduced through interviews with four leading advocates in this field.

In 1968 the National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children of the U.S. Office of Education presented a definition of specific learning disabilities. This definition is referred to as the USOE definition and/or the NACHC definition. It states :

"Children with special learning disabilities exhibit a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written languages. These may be manifested in disorders of listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling, or arithmetic. They include conditions which have been referred to as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, developmental aphasia, etc. They do not include learning problems which are due primarily to visual, hearing or motor handicaps, to mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or to environmental disadvantage." [USOE, 1968, p. 34]

Mercer, Forgnone, & Wolking (1976) investigated and analyzed the components of the NACHC definition. They found that the process component was the most prominent factor in the NACHC definition. Among 42 states, 83% of the state definitions include process definitions. As indicated earlier, the part of the NACHC definition, "exhibit a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological process involved in understanding or in using spoken or written language" (p.34), is the statement of process deficits.

This definition shows that specific learning disability is conceptualized by the discrepancy between the potential and the achievement. That is, the concept of learning disability has become synonymous with underachievement (Boodoo et al., 1989). The problem in identifying the GUA and GLD, through measuring this discrepancy, becomes complex.

Characteristics

Often times, their learning disability has not been realized by their teachers, parents, and themselves. However, gifted learning disabled students are more aware of their difficulties with learning than average learning disabled students because they are more sensitive to their eerie behaviors, are self-critical, and are more aware of their own knowledge (Withmore and Maker, 1985 ; Baum, 1984). Their twice exceptionalities should be considered to get any help to overcome their weakness. This subgroup includes students who have a learning disability but who also have gifted characteristics.

The gifted have high self-concept, exhibit good study habits, and demonstrate outstanding memory skills. The GLD might not show any of these characteristics. However, " Learning disability must be addressed if the giftedness is ever to be a benefit to the child. " (Collin, et al. 1988)

Characteristics of the GLD have been identified by Tannenbaum and Baldwin (1983) as shown in Table2. They compared these set of characteristics of the GLD with those of the highly motivated and intelligent students.

Educational implications for the GLD

There is a lack of inter-communication between teachers of the gifted and those of the learning disabled. Teachers of the GLD should be ones who have been prepared (or trained) for teaching learning disabilities and in giftedness. Teachers should recognize two exceptionalities, which the GLD show in his or her learning enviornment and should look for strengths and weaknesses.

If possible, teachers would be able to refer the students who exhibits giftedness and has a learning problem for the gifted program. One study by Minner (1990) noted that teachers of the gifted were more willing to refer non-handicapped youngsters than learning disabled students for the placement in a gifted program.

Table 2 Characteristics of high IQ, highly motivated vs. high IQ, learning disabled children

The child with tested intelligence motivation	The learning-disabled with and strong high tested intelligence
Perfectionist- high expectations of self and others	Frustrated with inability to master high priority, scholastic skills. The need to avoid failure leads to a refusal to perform required task Unhappiness over failure to live up to own expectations often leads to frustration and anger Denies learning problem by stating that school activity is "dumb" or too easy. Deceivers by doing work so sloppily that it is impossible to evaluate.
Vicarious consumer of knowledge- retains extraordinary quantities of information ; desires to explore, to know, to discover	Bored with regular curriculum, particularly if it is text-book- and workbook- oriented. Has large knowledge base, which may have been acquired through intact sensory processes, but often suffers from" verbal diarrhea" to compensate for perceived failures in various school subjects. Bores classmates with long- winded or pompous disquisitions that reveal more information than anybody wants to know. May feel comfortable in revealing solid knowledge only in the safety of a one to one relationship with an adult. May divert conversation to more complex and challenging subjects. Reacts obstinately to criticism or doubt

The child with tested intelligence
motivation

The learning-disabled with and strong
high tested intelligence

Possesses a variety of
interests and special
abilities

May also have a wide variety of interests,
but is handicapped in pursuing them
because of process and learning
difficulties

Parents often report many interests at
home, but child seems dull,
uninterested in activities at a school

Is capable of self-entertainment for
long periods of time when there is
no required work to do

Language skills are highly
developed

May use verbal skills to avoid or mask
specific language and behavior
disorders

May not use a large vocabulary when
speaking, but can explain meaning
of words far beyond age expectancy

Enjoys playing with words and their
diverse meanings, even at
inappropriate times and in
appropriate ways

Shows alertness, high energy
level and accelerated pace
of thinking

May be viewed as hyperactive because
of need to be actively involved

Frustrated by inactivity or too much
emphasis on deficient skills in the
classroom

Impatient during social studies and
science lessons that are textbook-
oriented. Asks thought- provoking
questions that may be misinterpreted
; may also try to divert class
discussions to current events

Easily distracted by activities and
conversations going on in other
part of the classroom

Has difficulty focusing attention on
written tasks or workbook pages

The child with tested intelligence
motivation

The learning-disabled with and strong
high tested intelligence

Able to generate creative
ideas about new problems
and innovative solutions

May be performing a task in a new or
creative way, but seems not to be
following directions
o old ones

Dislikes rote and drill exerc Tes, such
as reciting arithmetic facts

Is unusually sensitive to the
feelings of self and others

Sensitive to criticism by others, and
highly critical of self and others
Can understand and express concern
about the feelings of others even
while engaging in anti-social behavior

Able to size up situations and utilize
them to own advantage ; may
become skillfulat manipulating
others, including parents and teachers

Is sensitive to inconsistencies in
teacher's disciplinary procedures
and will complain about such
unfairness

Possesses a keen sense of
humor

May use a sense of humor to clown
and divert attention from failure in
school activities

May use humor to demean or make
fun of other students

Possesses extraordinary critical
thinking skills and sees
unusual relationships in
objects, events, and ideas

May combine ideas or express
solutions that peers and teachers
find bizarre

May be regarded as disrespectful
because of tendency to question
teacher's facts or conclusions

FROM: Tannenbaum, A. J., & Baldwin, L. J. (1983).

Giftedness and learning disability : A paradoxical combination.

In : Fox, Brody, & Tobin (Eds.). Learning- disabled, Gifted Children, pp 26-28,
Baltimore, MD : University Park Press.

The major characteristics of the GLD is that he or she is lacking in one of the learning areas but is exhibiting strengths in certain areas. Like Thomas Edison and /or Einstein, the GLD might show difficulties in speaking, writing, mathematics, or memory but have outstanding abilities in creative thinking and problem solving.

Develop compensatory skills

Once teachers recognize learning disabilities in their students, they should make proper adjustment. The GLD should be taught to compensate for his or her difficulties. Teachers could help the GLD, who have the difficulty in reading learn compensatory skills. For example, the GLD can bring their small tape recorder to the classroom instead of taking notes. Or peer tutoring can be a help. The peer of the GLD can use the carbon copy note and give it to the GLD for his or her study.

The GLD, who have problems in expression for his or her oral presentation, could be asked to write their report instead. You as a teacher will find outstanding creative writing abilities through their written work. Calculators and computers can be given to the GLD who have mathematics problems.

Provide proper placement and program

Will the GLD be able to participate in gifted program? The GLD can be allowed to go to the resource room for the learning -disabled or the gifted /talented. Of course, the GLD can be fully mainstreamed. If either type of the resource room will be likely to affect the social- emotional development, the GLD should preferably be placed in the regular classroom most of the time.

Most of the GLD do not have severe learning problems, which requires a special program (Fox, Tobin, & Schiffman, 1983). Therefore if minor educational adaptations could be made, the GLD can possibly be placed in the gifted program. There have been few suggestions for the GLD programming (Fox, Tobin & Schiffman, 1983 ; Gallagher, 1975). Fox, Tobin, & Schiffman (1983) stated that there instructional approaches have been recommended for learning-disabled students ; (1) developmental instruction in areas where learning problems do not hinder from understanding the material ; (2) remediation in problem areas ; (3) adaptive technique by using simple equipment along with some modification of teaching strategies. They recommended that the GLD can be allowed to successfully participate in gifted programming by the use of adaptive technique to circumvent the areas of the disability.

Gallagher (1975) suggested that the curriculum modification and adequate placement should be made for the GLD by addressing specific exceptionalities and including adaptation goals in the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).

EDUCATION FOR THE GUA AND THE GLD

Mentorship

The use of community resources, members of community group, and parents is an important contributing factor in the learning environment for both groups. Tannenbaum & Baldwin (1983) listed a characteristics of the GLD. One of them is that the gifted " May feel comfortable in revealing solid knowledge only in the safety of a one-to-one relationship with an adult. " (p. 26) It clearly shows that the need with this characteristics should be met through one-to-one type of mentor program.

Mentor program has been noted that it can help the GUA and the GLD (Gallagher, 1983; Sisk, 1987). Sisk (1987) suggested that GUA reveal their needs to work with the mentor through the mentor intervention the GUA improve his/her achievement, demonstrate better study skills, and decrease the rate the absenteeism.

Gallagher (1983) suggested that mentor program is one of the educational program for the GLD. Mentor program was described by Gallagher as follows : " Gifted students may leave the school under this plan and on a regular basis, meet with a specialist in their area of interest for specialized instruction. The mentor typically is not a school employee but a specialist in a field of interest (Such as music, computers, scientific research, and economics). " (p. 177) Mentor program can be utilized to fill the gap of needs unmet in the (regular) classroom for the GUA and the GLD. These sub- population of the gifted need to have a real life role-model who can mentor program provide guidance into the career and assistance in the college admission for the GUA and GLD. Mentorship allows the GUA to work with professionals and learn more about their career options on a daily basis. They need to explore career options through independent study and first-hand experience. Silverman (1989) suggested that finding gifted mentors who have learning disabilities to work with the children can be a successful teaching strategy for the GLD.

SUMMARIES & CONCLUSIONS

Gifted underachievers are not achieving up to their potential even though they have high abilities in many areas. Characteristics of gifted underachievers are similar to those of gifted learning disabled (Silverman, 1989). Both populations are not qualified for the gifted program because of low achievement score. They are described as follows:

low in self-esteem, socially isolated, supersensitive, distractible, and critical of self and others (Whitmore, 1980 ; Maker, 1977 ; Tannenbaum and Baldwin, 1983). It is a natural to assume that both groups have in common because they have been identified through the gap between their abilities and actual performance.

In conclusion, parents and teachers of the gifted should be educated about causes, characteristics, and needs of underachievement and learning disabilities among the gifted. Considering the similarities and differences between two groups, educators should differentiate intervention program and instructional strategies for each type :

1. The etiology of learning difficulty and underachievement among the gifted are different, it troubles educators and parents in unexplainable and deep ways.

Causes of gifted underachievers differ from those of gifted learning disabled in that causes of GUA stem from a variety of social, psychological, and pedagogical problems that do not result from the one or more of basic information processing difficulties.

Whereas causes of gifted underachievers include poor family environment, uninterested or neutral parental attitude toward education, inappropriate curriculum, causes of GLD are referred to as minimal brain damage, minimal brain injury, or minimal brain dysfunction. Minimal brain dysfunction and/or brain injury represent the neurological component. (Mercer et al., 1976)

2. Learning disabilities do not always contribute to underachievement or low-achievement in academics. For example, Albert Einstein is considered as an learning disabled but high achievers. It has been reported that he was not able to learn to talk until he was age 3 ; nor read until he was 9 years old.

Therefore, GLD should not be identified as a GUA. However, school system might identify a GLD as a GUA since the gap between ability and achievement has been widely used to find out a learning disabled student.

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